

SOME IMPORTANT ŚĀRADĀ INSCRIPTIONS OF KASHMIR- A SOCIO-POLITICAL STUDY

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IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 8TH CENTURY, we find in the Brāhmī alphabet of North Western India a distinct development of a new alphabet which, though agreeing in many respects with that used in the epigraphic and literary records of the 6th and the 7th centuries, including the famous Gilgit Manuscripts, shows several essential differences in the forms of several characters. This alphabet is known as the Śāradā alphabet. Though an alphabet of Kashmir *par excellence*, the Śāradā has remained for several centuries a popular script of an extensive area of North Western India including Gandhara or the north-western part of West Pakistan, Ladakh, Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Delhi. Nothing is known for certain with regard to the origin of the name of the alphabet, but this much is certain that it must have originated in Kashmir which, from earliest times, has been the principal seat of Śāradā or the goddess of learning and has been named after her as Śāradā-maṇḍala or Śāradā-pīṭha.

The earliest known record in which the Śāradā characters appear for the first time is a stone slab inscription discovered at the village Hund in the Attock district of West Pakistan.¹ It is dated in Saṃ 168 which according to D. R. Sahni refers to the Harsha era and corresponds to 774 A.D.² On the basis of this inscription, the earliest use of the Śāradā alphabet may be dated about 750 A.D. The alphabet continued to be used in Himachal Pradesh and Punjab up to the 13th century when it was replaced by its descendant the Dēvaśēsha which in turn gave rise to the modern alphabets of Gurmukhi and Tākari. In Kashmir, however, its use continues to this day though it is confined to the older generation of the priestly class.

Considering the extent of the region over which the Śāradā alphabet remained in use for a long time, the number of Śāradā epigraphic records discovered so far is by no means very large. In all 98 inscriptions have been discovered so far, 12 in North Western Pakistan, 35 in Kashmir, 6 in Jammu, 5 in Ladakh, 36 in Chamba, 3 in Kangra and 1 in Haryana.

On the basis of the Śāradā characters used in these records three successive stages of development of the Śāradā alphabet can easily be discerned. The earliest phase is represented by the inscriptions and the coins of 8th to 10th centuries, the 2nd by those of the 11th-14th centuries and the third and the final by the epigraphic and the literary records of the 14th and the subsequent centuries.

While the use of the Śāradā alphabet in the inscriptions dates from the latter half of the 8th century A. D., its use in the manuscripts, however, is not known until the 12th century A. D., when we find it first used in a manuscript discovered from the village Bakhsali in Peshawar district of West-Pakistan³. The manuscript which contains an important work on Mathematics bears no date but on palaeographic grounds it can be assigned to the 12th century.

We may now make a brief mention of some important Śāradā records of Kashmir and see what light they throw on the contemporary political and social conditions.

The two earliest Śāradā epigraphic records discovered in Kashmir so far belong to the reign of Queen Diddā. One of them is incised on the base of an image of the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi, preserved in the S. P. S. Museum, Śrīnagar and the other is engraved on a stone slab discovered from a private house in Śrīnagar and now lying in the Lahore Museum.⁴ The former, which is dated in the year 65 in the reign of Queen Diddā, records the consecration of a religious gift consisting of the image itself by a son of *Rājānaka* Bhīma and the latter, dated in the year 68, mentions a certain individual Dharmāṅka who gladdened his mother by charitable diggings (probably of wells, tanks etc.) and dedicated some charitable work, the nature of which is not traceable in the record, the text being lost at this place, to perpetuate her memory. The dates of the inscriptions probably refer to the Laukika era and correspond respectively to 989 and 992 A. D.

Both these dates fall well within the reign of Queen Diddā and thus attest to the correctness of Kalhana's chronology.

The point of some historical importance in the two records is the mention of Queen Diddā with the masculine epithets of *deva* and *rajan*. These epithets for the Queen sound rather queer but they would show how she was looked upon by the people of her times more as a powerful king than as a mere queen apparently because of her energy, political acumen and essentially masculine traits of character which enabled her to rule over Kashmir with firmness for more than half a century in very troubled times.

The two inscriptions, further, present a glaring picture of the religious tolerance as practised in ancient Kashmir. While the one which contains an invocation of Lord Viṣṇu in the beginning attests to the flourishing state of Vaiṣṇavism in the valley in the 10th century, the other furnishes evidence of the flourishing condition of Buddhism in the valley about the same time. The predominant Brahmanic faith, however, appears to have exercised great influence on the contemporary Buddhist religion. An evidence to this effect is furnished by the image of the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi referred to above which represents the Bodhisattva as wearing a sacred thread in the fashion of the Brahmanas.

THE DACCHAN STONE INSCRIPTION OF ANANTADEVA :

Our next inscription in date belongs to the reign of Nantadēva. It is incised on a big hard-grained granite boulder which was discovered by R. C. Kak at Dacchan near Kishtwar. It is dated in the year 12 in the reign of Śrī Nantadēva. This king appears to be identical with the king Ananta who ruled Kashmir from 1028 to 1063 A. D. The year 12, presumably of the Laukika era, corresponds to 1036 A. D. which well falls within the reign of the king. The inscription does not provide any details about the king except the bare mention of his name. The findspot of the inscription would, however, show that Kishtwar lay within his empire. This seems all the more likely since Ananta's conquest of Chamba and Vallapura recounted by Kalhana⁵ could not have been effected without the previous possession of Kishtwar which lay on the direct route to it.

This brief record is specially important as it furnishes evidence of the common man's active participation in the works of public utility even in the remote corners of ancient Kashmir. We learn that an individual named Mahimagupta constructed a bridge for the good of the people obviously at Dacchan where the inscribed stone was found. The official who designed the bridge bore the designation *Karmapati* and is probably the same as *Navakarmapati* commonly met with in inscriptions and signifying an officer in charge of new constructions. In our case, he was probably an overseer or *mistri* to whom the execution of the construction of the bridge was entrusted,

S.P.S. MUSEUM AND ARIGOM STONE INSCRIPTIONS OF JAYASIMHA

Our next inscription from Kashmir belongs to the reign of king Jayasimha. It is preserved in the S. P. S. Museum, Śrinagar, and is dated in the year 25 which when referred to the Laukika era corresponds to 1149 A. D. The epigraph records the re-consecration probably of some image or religious institution by the son of a certain Bhaṭṭagovinda.

Except the bare mention of Jayasimha, the inscription does not furnish any information of historical importance about him. He, however, seems to be identical with the king Simha mentioned in our next important inscription, viz. the Arigom stone slab inscription of the (Laukika) year 73 corresponding to 1197 A. D.⁷ which contains the interesting information of the latter having burnt a wooden shrine constructed by a certain Rāmadēva to house an image of the Bōdhisattva Avalōkitēśvara near Gaṅgēśvara temple. The identification seems all the more plausible since the burning of Arigom (ancient Hāḍigrāma) in Jayasimha's reign is also referred to by Kalhaṇa who attributes the burning of the town to Jayasimha's powerful minister Sujji. It would seem that the shrine was burnt down along with the village itself.

For the history of religion in Kashmir, the Arigom inscription, now lying in the S. P. S. Museum, Śrinagar, is particularly important as it furnishes evidence of the continued flourishing state of Buddhism in the valley even as late as the end of the 12th century. From this inscription, as also from that of the

reign of Queen Diddā discussed above and of the reign of Rājadēva to be discussed below, we learn that the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism, which first introduced the concept of Bōdhisattva in the Buddhist faith, had a great following in the Valley in the 10th and the subsequent centuries and that the worship of Bōdhisattvas was prevalent. This is particularly significant since Kashmir had remained for long a great stronghold of the Sarvāstivādins and the Vaibhāshikas.

Again, this well preserved epigraph from Arigom contains an interesting information about the nature of the building material used in the valley in the 12th century. We learn that both wood and burnt bricks were used for architectural purposes for it is stated in the inscription that a certain Rāmadēva constructed a shrine of burnt bricks in place of the wooden one which was burnt by the king Simha, i. e. Jayasimha.

TAPAR STONE INSCRIPTION OF PARAMANDADĒVA

Our next inscription, incised on a huge stone lintel discovered from Tapar (ancient Pratāpapura) and now preserved in the S. P. S. Museum, records the consecration of something not recorded in the inscription but probably of an image or temple of which the huge inscribed lintel formed a part, by a certain Gaga, son of Jagarāja in the year 33, on the 15th day of the bright fortnight of Āshāḍha in the reign of Paramāṇḍadēva.

The mention of Paramāṇḍadēva as the ruling prince is of interest as the king of this name does not figure in the known list of the Kashmir rulers. The identification of Paramāṇḍadēva, as such, presents some difficulty. Since the characters of this inscription agree with those of the Arigom stone slab inscription of 1197 A. D. referred to above, we may assign the inscription to the 12th century and refer the year 33 to the Laukika era, corresponding to 1157 A. D. According to Jōnarāja⁸ the king ruling at that time in Kashmir was Paramāṇuka, the son and successor of Jayasimha. It seems that Paramāṇḍadēva of our inscription is the same as Paramāṇuka of Jōnarāja. Kalhaṇa mentions Paramāṇḍi as a son of Jaysimha and it would seem that Paramāṇḍi, Paramāṇḍadēva and Paramāṇuka signify the same person.

THE BIJBEHARA STONE INSCRIPTION OF RAJADĒVA

A brief record belonging to the reign of king Rājadēva was

discovered by John Marshall from the house of a Brahmin at Bijbēharā during his tour of the valley in 1808-09. This epigraph merely mentions the name of Rājadēva as the ruling prince but does not tell anything of his reign. A brief account of his reign is, however, given by Jōnarāja⁹ who describes him as the son and successor of Jagadēva and as having ruled Kashmir from Laukika (42) 89 or 1213 A. D. to Laukika (43) 49 or 1236 A. D.

The inscription is dated in the year 58, on the 7th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Vaiśākha. The year 58, if, as usual, referred to the Laukika era, corresponds to 1284 A.D. which, however, does not fall within the reign of Rājadēva. Marshall¹⁰ suggests that the date of the inscription should be referred to the Śaka era which was also sometimes used in Kashmir. The date of the inscription would in this case correspond to Laukika (43) 12, Vaiśākha śu. 7 which precedes the date of Rājadēva's death, viz. Laukika (43) 12, Śrāvaṇa śu. 11 as given by Jōnarāja, by three months and four days.

This brief epigraph which is now lying in a private house in Śrīnagar, records the consecration of Lōkēśvara-bhaṭṭārakamaṇḍalakam by Āchārya Kamalaśrīya. The exact meaning of Lōkēśvara-bhaṭṭāraka-maṇḍalakam is doubtful. According to Vogel¹¹ it may be the Tantric designation of a particular magical circle. The inscription is incised on a well polished square slab with a round disc at the top. It seems that this round disc is the *maṇḍalaka* of the inscription. The term *bhaṭṭāraka* means a lord and Lōkēśvara is the alternative form of Avalokitēśvara, the name of a famous Bōdhisatva. The entire expression would thus mean 'the *maṇḍalaka* consecrated in honour of lord Avalokitēśvara'. It would seem that *maṇḍalaka* was a cult object used for the worship of Bōdhisattvas and that it was the practice among the Buddhists of Kashmir to consecrate the same with the aim of earning spiritual merit.

THE KOTIHER INSCRIPTION OF SHIHAB-U-DIN

Our next important but unfortunately badly damaged inscription was discovered from a well at Kotiher, ancient Kaptēśvara in the Anantnag district and is now lying in the Śrīnagar museum. It is incised on an oblong stone slab the right hand lower corner of which is broken leading to the loss of a good portion of the inscription. The epigraph

begins with an invocation of Lord Gaṇēśa, the remover of all obstacles and records the construction of some charitable work, probably a well by certain lady named Jōdha. By far the most important portion of the inscription is that which contains a eulogy of Shihab-ud-Din who was the ruling king when the inscription was put up. This eulogy, though purely conventional, is of importance as it contains some interesting facts about Shihab-ud-Din not known from the literary sources. The eulogy may briefly be summarised as follows:

"In the sacred country of Kashmir, a land of prosperity, rules the king of kings Sahabōdēna, a scion of the house of Pāṇḍavas; scorched by the blazing fire of whose unrivalled prowess, the enemies repaired to the far off lands, whose fame, spotless as the lustre of the thousand moons, filled the four quarters, by hearing the deafening and high pitched wang of whose powerful bow, the enemies ran away disarranged, by whom was conquered the land of the Madras.....". The rest of the text is damaged and badly carved in incorrect Sanskrit and it is difficult to make any sense out of the preserved portion.

Leaving aside the conventional portion of the praise we notice two points in this eulogy which are important from historical point of view. First is the mention of Sahabōdēna or Shihāb-ud-din as a scion of the Pāṇḍava house. This apparently sounds queer, for a Muhammadan king could hardly claim descent from the Pāṇḍavas. Kedarnath Shastri¹² opines that the sultan took pride in being styled as a scion of the Pāṇḍavas as he wanted to link himself with the ancient lunar race of India to justify his family's accession to the throne of Kashmir by supplanting the Hindu dynasty of the valley. However, it seems more likely that the epithet is due to the pious wish on the part of the eulogiser to connect the great contemporary ruler to an illustrious and celebrated Kshatriya family of the past simply because of his greatness and prowess and without any specific consideration of the faith to which the Sultan adhered. The second important point is Shihab-ud-Din's victory over the Madras which is of great importance as the same is not mentioned in the Kashmir chronicles which otherwise gave detailed account of the victories of the Sultan.

The Madras are an ancient Kshatriya tribe whose history dates back to the Vedic times. In the Vedic literature, they

figure as a people who have been divided into two sections, viz. the Dakṣiṇa-Madrāḥ who lived in the Panjab and the Uttara-Madrāḥ who probably lived, as Zimmer conjectures, in the land of Kashmir not distant from the Kāmbōjas¹³. In the *Aitrēya Brāhmaṇa*,¹⁴ the Madras are mentioned as living beyond the Himālayas. In the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*¹⁵ Madra-dēśa or the land of the Madras is mentioned as a *janapada* or a kingdom along with Kāmbōja, Gandhāra, etc. In the *Mahābhārata* the Madras are mentioned as allies of the Kauravas and their king Śalya figures as the commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army. In the Allahābād pillar inscription of Samudragupta, the Madras are mentioned in the form of Madrakas as an autonomous frontier tribe "giving all kinds of taxes and obeying (his) orders and coming to perform obeisance".¹⁶

From these and several other references it seems that the country of the Madras lay in the Punjab. Its capital was Śākala or modern Sialkōṭ which stood on the bank of the Āpagā stream identified with modern Aik, a small stream which has its rise in the Jammu hills and flows to the north-east of Sialkōṭ.

Shihab-ud-Din is credited with the conquest of a large number of countries and towns in the Kashmir chronicles as eg. Udabhāṇḍapura, Sindhu, Gandhāra, Purushavira, Hidgugosha, Suśarmapura, Bhautta, etc. It would seem that Shihab-ud-Din, while annexing Gandhāra, Western Panjab and some parts of eastern Panjab including Suśarmapura or Kot Kangra, also traversed the central Punjab and conquered the Siālkōṭ region or the Madra-dēśa as it was called then.

THE KHONAMUH INSCRIPTION OF ZAIN-UL-ABIDIN

We next pass on to an inscription which is incised on a rectangular stone slab lying at the mouth of a stream at Bhuvanēśvari situated on a hill side 1 mile above the village of Khōnamuh and visited on way to the pilgrimage to the famous *tīrtha* of Harshēśvara or Hariśvara. The record consisting of ten lines is written in verse with the exception of the date portion in the beginning which is in prose. It records the construction of a hermitage by a merchant named Pūrṇaka at Khōnamōśa in the Kali year 4530 when Satisara was ruled by Javanōlabadēna, son of Sakandara, and Chindaka was the district officer at

Khōnamōśa. It further states that at Bhuvanēśa situated half a *yōjana* below the shrine of god Harshēśvara, where flows the celestial stream, remover of all sin, there came from the castle of king Jayāpīḍa, an ascetic named Gammatīsōdaka to practice penance. Having conquered Māra of powerful darkness he engaged himself in meditation, wishing to attain that state of imperishableness which knows no fall, and at the proper time he found the way to Śiva by means of that meditation. The last part of the inscription mentions two individuals Katha and Kanathaka who stood there as witnesses and names the writer of the inscription as Gaggaka.

It will be seen that the king Javanōlabadēna, mentioned as the ruling prince when the record was set up, is undoubtedly the famous Kashmir ruler Zain-ul-abidin who ruled from 1420 to 1470 A.D., who was the son of Sikandara, Sakandara of our inscription, who was the king of Kashmir from 1389 to 1413 A.D. The Kali year 4530 corresponds to 1428 A.D. which would show that the hermitage was built in the eighth regnal year of Zain-ul-abidin. The hermitage is no longer extant. There is an old mosque at the site of the inscription but it cannot be said with certainty if this shrine represents the ancient hermitage.

The inscription is specially important as it contains some place-names like Satisara, Khōnamōśa and the castle of Jayāpīḍa. Satisara, as is well-known, is the ancient name of Kashmir which, according to a legend told at length in the *Nīlamatapūrāṇa*, was originally a lake known as Satisara. Khōnamōśa is the Khōnamuśa of the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (1.90) which is the ancient name of the modern village of Khonamuha situated 9 miles to the east of Śrīnagar. Khonamuha is the birth place of the famous poet Bilhaṇa, author of *Vikaramāṅkadēvacharita* who enthusiastically sings the charms of his home village in his celebrated work and describes it as situated in the vicinity of Jayavana, modern Zevan and as famous for its grape and saffron cultivation.¹⁷ The mention of the castle of king Jayāpīḍa is of interest as it is also mentioned in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (iv.506) where a full legend is told in connection with its construction by the said king who was a grandson of the famous king Lalitāditya. The castle was popularly known in

Kalhaṇa's times as 'Abhyantara Kōṭa' or the inner castle. Bühler, during the course of his tour of the valley in 1875, traced the site of the castle near the village of Andarkōṭ situated on the Manasbal lake. It is mentioned by Śrīvara at several places in his chronicle and his references together with our own would show that the place continued to be known in the 15th century as Jayāpiṭapura or Jayāpiṭa-durga, the town or castle founded by Jayāpiṭa.

Another interesting feature of the record is the mention of district officer (*dēśādhipati*) along with the ruling king. The term *dēśādhipati* signifies the lord of *deśa* which is a territorial unit commonly met with in the copper plate inscriptions. In the present case it denotes a district or a tahsil.

PARBAT GRAVE STONE INSCRIPTION OF MOHAMMAD SHAH-HARI

Our next well-known inscription is engraved on a rock in the cemetery surrounding the Ziarat of Baha-ud-din at Hariparbat. The inscription is widely known and has been referred to by Hultzsch, Kielhorn and also described briefly by Marshall in his Tour report.¹⁸ The inscription, which is accompanied by the Persian inscription in Arabic characters, of the same content, commemorates the death of certain Saida Khān, son of Aibrahm who fell in the battle near Jishthaludra mentioned as Takhta-Gahi-Sulaiman in the Persian inscription. The epigraph is dated in the year 60, on the first day of the dark fortnight of the month of Śrāvaṇa in the reign of Muhammad Shāh. Muhammad Shah is undoubtedly the Muslim king of this name who ruled over Kashmir at chequered intervals from 1484 to 1537 A.D. The date of the inscription corresponds, according to the calculations of Kielhorn, to Friday, 9th July, 1484 A.D.

There can be no doubt that the battle referred to in the inscription is the same battle which was fought at Śrinagar between the Sayyids and the Kashmiri nobles in the time of the minor king Muhammad Shāh. The date of the inscription coincides with the date of the termination of the battle as given by Śrīvara.¹⁹

Saida Khān mentioned in the inscription seems to be identical with Saida Khān described by Śrīvara as one of the great soldiers who fought on the side of the Sayyids. Unfortunately

Śrīvara gives no details about Saida Khān and the identification of his father Aibrahm is as such difficult. In the Persian inscription accompanying our epigraph the name given is Ibrahim Shāh. Marshall²⁰ suggests that he may be identified with Ibrahim Shāh Sharqui, king of Jaunpur (1401-1440 A.D.) who along with his son Saida Khān seems to have fled to Kashmir on the annexation of Jaunpur by Bahlol Lodhi in 1474 A. D.

The two epigraphs furnish interesting evidence of the contemporary use of the Śāradā and the Arabic scripts in the Valley during the Muhammadan period.

THE ZAJI NAI INSCRIPTION

Our next interesting inscription is the Zaji Nai inscription which was found by R.C. Kak at the southern extremity of a mountain glen called Zaji Nai near Wadwan in the Doda district of Jammu.²¹ It is incised on a small lime stone block now preserved in the S. P. S. Museum. Owing to the stone being broken into fragments and some fragments being lost, the exact purport of the inscription is difficult to ascertain. From the mention of such phrases as *aśvapadam*, *praśishṭhitam*, *aśvagaraksha* and from the occurrence of the figure of a horse at the bottom of the stone block, it may be presumed that the inscription records the erection of a stable for the protection of horses and cows or cattle in general. The inscription, like the one discovered at Dacchan referred to above, furnishes another instance of the ancient Kashmirian's active interest in works of public utility. As is well known, the cattle were then, as at present, sent to the pastures at high mountain peaks for grazing in summer. They were exposed to danger of being eaten up by wild animals. As such, the erection of a stable was a dire need which was fulfilled by a lay man of this remote region whose name is unfortunately not preserved in the epigraph.

Before winding up this note, it may be worthwhile to mention the sites of other inscriptions which have been discovered in the Valley so far but which, being fragmentary and sketchy in character, have not been included in the present study. These sites are:—Lodue, Avantipur, Bijbehara, Wular Hama, Martand, Digon or Kapal Mochan, Lasityal, Parepur, Sogam, Uskhur and Kotisar. The inscription found at Uskhur near

Baramula by De Ruyter, the then headmaster of the Church mission School at Baramula, is now lying in the museum of the University of Pennsylvania in U. S. A. It is engraved on the upper left hand portion of a relief which bears the equestrian portrait of a warrior on horse back. Written in badly formed Śāradā characters I have not yet been able to decipher fully the inscription.

It is also worthy of note that though Kalhaṇa explicitly states in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* that he studied all types of inscriptions including the *Vastu-śāsanas* or the inscriptions recording grants of things chiefly of land for writing his chronicle, no copper-plate inscription recording the grant of land has come to light so far. The copper-plate inscriptions are regarded as mines of historical information which fact is amply demonstrated by the copper-plate inscriptions of Chamba which have provided a solid base for the reconstruction of the history of this ancient hill state from the 9th century to the last known ruler in an almost continuous strain. The absolute absence of copper-plate grants in Valley cannot but be severely felt by any student of Kashmir history.

Notes:

1. *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 97 ff.
2. *Ibid.*
3. The manuscript edited by G. R. Kaye in *ASI.*, New Imperial Series, Volume XLIII, Parts one and two.
4. *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XXVII, pp. 153 ff.
5. *Antiquities of Marev Wadwan*, pp. 24-25.
6. *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, VIII, 218.
7. *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. IX, pp. 300-302.
8. *Dvitiya Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, 39.
9. *Ibid.*, vv. 79-91.
10. *Note on a Tour in Kashmir*, p. 21.
11. Quoted by Marshall, *Ibid.* See also Summaries of papers read at the XXIII Oriental Conference (Aligarh Session), p. 140.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Vedic Index*, Volume I, pp. 84-85.

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14. VIII, 14. 3.
15. IV. 2. 131.
16. *CII.*, Vol. III, p. 8, text line 22.
17. *Vikramaṅkadeva's Charita*, XVII, 70-72
18. Hultzsch, *Z. D.M.G.*, LX, p. 9; Kielhorn, *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XX, p. 153; Marshall, *Note on a Tour in Kashmir*, pp. 17 f.
19. *Śrīvara Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, IV, 334.
20. *Op. cit.*, p. 17.
21. R. C. Kak, *Antiquities of Marev Wadwan*, pp. 12 ff.